

## Dixon Ridge Farms

### Organically Grown Walnuts

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Good morning Secretary Kawamura, Chair Montna and the State Board of Food and Agriculture. I commend your effort to embark on a statewide strategic agricultural vision and thank you for your interest in gathering public input.

My name is Jenny Lester Moffitt and my family owns and operates Dixon Ridge Farms, an organic walnut farming operation and the largest processor of organic walnuts in the state.

In 2030, I hope that agriculture California is a strong, vibrant economy, environmental resource and producer of enough food to at least feed the people of our state.

However, we face some challenges. I feel that many current farming practices must change. Our dependence on outside inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and fossil fuels is not only non-sustainable, but has created a low urban public perception of the industry.

We must **conduct farming, ranching, and fishing activities in ways that maximize leverage of biological systems thereby minimizing the need for human intervention, so that natural resources (soil, water and air) are enhanced and ecosystem health increased. Why?** By adapting an integrative and regenerative approach to production there will be reduced production costs, reduced impacts from toxics, positive impact on public and ecological health, and California producers will be positioned as the world's highest quality producers, where quality includes ecological values and attributes.

Maintaining California's fertile soil while still producing a high quality food can be done: we do it on our farm. We enhance the ecosystem utilizing Integrated Pest Management practices that have naturally reduced our orchard's pest problems and reduce our needs for pesticide applications. Rather than fertilize our soil with chemicals, a vibrant cover crop of legumes, native grasses, mustards and clovers fix nitrogen and other nutrients into the soil. To protect the environment and our employees, we feel that a truly sustainable system minimizes the use of chemicals.

Additionally, **all agricultural and food production systems recycle waste, limit CO2 emissions, and reduce the use of nitrogen, petroleum and other non-renewable inputs.**

**Why?** A sustainable food system consumes as few input materials as possible (in particular non-renewable inputs such as fossil fuels) and minimizes its production of unwanted outputs (such as solid waste, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, nitrogen accumulation, and other toxic effluent and pollution).

Resource shortages and ecological impacts require it. We owe this to future generations.

Again, this can be done. On our farm our tree prunings are chipped and returned to the soil as nutrients. We utilize no-till/low-mow practices, reducing soil erosion, increasing water percolation and in turn, recharging the valley's groundwater while entirely eliminating irrigation water runoff. The fewer passes our tractors make through our orchards, the less fuel used and the fewer emissions are released into the air.

In our processing plant, we have embarked on a goal to be a net zero energy user of all types of energy by 2012 while also being carbon and nitrous-oxide negative, using non-food sources for energy, all the while maintaining our company's strategic and sustainable growth. We are accomplishing this goal by utilizing technology that converts walnut shell into electricity and gas to fuel our dryers, installing solar panels on all of our roof tops, and pressing inedible walnuts into oil to fuel our tractors.

While our operation is only one small piece of the California agriculture sector, I hope that other farms can be encouraged by the CDFA to move in a similar direction.

However, we will not be able to accomplish much without a future workforce. We must **attract more young people to choose a career in farming.** **Why?** In 2007 the average age of a California farmer is over 57 years old. In order for a future sustainable food system to thrive in the state, the roadblocks impeding young people from entering agriculture need to be identified, and incentives for younger people to enter into agriculture must be developed.

Thank you for your time.